

Fate, and Second Chances

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/25963021) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/25963021>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Cobra Kai (Web Series) , Karate Kid (Movies)
Relationship:	Daniel LaRusso/Johnny Lawrence
Character:	Daniel LaRusso , Johnny Lawrence , Amanda LaRusso , Samantha LaRusso , Lucille LaRusso , Bobby Brown (Karate Kid)
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe , Fluff and Smut , Humor , Falling In Love
Stats:	Published: 2020-08-17 Completed: 2020-08-30 Chapters: 3/3 Words: 14453

Fate, and Second Chances

by [lostmagician](#)

Summary

Daniel wakes up one morning to a whole new life. A world where he's living with Johnny and they run a dojo together. Johnny doesn't understand why Daniel is freaking out and practically hyperventilating in the living room.

A story about love, happiness, and second chances.

Notes

I had so much fun writing this story, and I'm so happy I can finally share it with all of you.

A Distant Magic

*When two stars collide with each other,
They can create a whole new universe.*

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Daniel woke up slowly, closing his eyes against the sunlight filtering through the blinds. His body was sore, like he'd spent all night getting ground to a pulp, and he had a splitting headache.

He groaned as memories of the previous night drifted to the surface: drinking a little too much at the country club, George leaning in with a giddy laugh (*so you're really gonna open the dojo again*), Amanda's eyes flashing in anger from across the table.

He should have discussed it with her first. He should have waited before telling the others. They'd fought all the way to the car, and then spent an hour screaming at each other when they arrived home.

Daniel frowned. The last thing he remembered was grabbing his things and going to sleep in Samantha's old room. It didn't explain why there was a heavy weight on his right side, and an arm around his waist.

That's when he became aware of something hard poking against his hip.

He tried to ignore it, but it became annoying enough that it started to disturb him. He opened his eyes and blinked away the spots in his vision. He got even more confused when he realized he was in Miyagi-Do.

How did he get here? *When* did he get here?

There was a hot breath against his throat. He lolled his head sideways, and let his eyes travel down, down, to where a head was lying on his shoulder...

A *blond* head.

Daniel screamed.

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It was Johnny. He was sleeping in the *same bed* as Johnny.

Johnny didn't understand why Daniel was freaking out, and practically hyperventilating in the living room. At first, he tried to pat Daniel on the shoulder, but when he realized it only made his panic attack worst, he backed off and stood five feet away.

He kept saying things like *We live together* and *Where else would I sleep?*

It wasn't helping. Eventually, Johnny got tired of explaining himself, and turned around to make some coffee. Daniel took the opportunity to grab the keys from the table and burst out through the door.

A press of the button led him to a silver Dodge Challenger. He climbed into the car and turned on the engine. Then, without a second thought, gunned it out of the driveway.

He went to the only place he could think of. It was a fifteen-minute drive away, and his jaw stayed clenched the entire time. He parked on the curb.

There was a girl with ponytails playing across the street. She gawked when Daniel jumped out of the car, dressed in only pyjamas and slippers.

Daniel didn't care. He ran to the house and rang the doorbell.

He waited for what felt like an eternity, tapping his foot against the ground. Just as he was about to ring again, the door swung wide open. Amanda took one look at him, her eyes widening.

"Amanda," Daniel said in relief. He dived in for a hug, and she went stiff as a board. "Oh my God. I'm so happy to see you." He pushed her back by the shoulders. "The craziest thing just happened. You wouldn't believe where I woke up and what that asshole is trying to make me beli—"

"Come inside," Amanda said, eyes darting around before letting him in.

Daniel obeyed blindly, his body vibrating with energy. "So, I wake up at the dojo and I feel someone next to me, I look down and there's Johnny, he's just *lying* there on top of—"

"Oh, hey Dan," a voice said from behind him.

"Hey," Daniel replied over his shoulder, before turning back to Amanda.

He did a wide double-take.

It was Anoush. He was coming down the stairs, dressed in plated pyjama bottoms and a robe. There was a newspaper under his armpit and a coffee cup in his hand. He stopped in front of them.

"What's going on?" Anoush asked, glancing at Amanda, then at Daniel. "Looks like you had a crazy night."

Amanda sidled closer to Anoush with a frown on her face. "Daniel was just saying that something happened at home." She hooked a hand around Anoush's elbow. "What's wrong? Did something happen with Johnny?"

He couldn't breathe anymore. She was watching him with expectant eyes, and so was Anoush. Though his face was slowly falling, the same way it did when he realized somebody had eaten the last donut in the break room.

Daniel opened his mouth, intent on saying something, *anything*.

He snapped it shut and went to lock himself in the bathroom.

He didn't know how long he spent there. At first, he paced back and forth trying to wrap his head around what was going on. After a while, Amanda came to the door and tried to talk him into coming out. He ignored her until she got the message and went away.

Daniel ended up sitting in a corner of the room with his knees bent and his face buried in his hands.

The last thing he remembered from the night before was the dinner at the country club. It was a summer event, and there were so many people there. Could somebody have slipped something into his drink? No, he'd been fine all evening until the fight with Amanda.

Did he maybe fall off the bed while he was sleeping and bump his head? Was this all some kind of crazy hallucination? Unless there was a much simpler explanation, and this was all a dream—a very, very bad dream.

Wake up, wake up, wake up.

There was a knock on the door.

"I said leave me alone," Daniel said, his voice muffled against his hands.

"It's me," a deep voice filtered through. It was Johnny, quite possibly the last person Daniel wanted to see. Then, in a quieter voice. "Come on, please come out. Amanda's gonna think we're fighting."

"We're not fighting," Daniel said, dropping his hands. "I don't even know you."

There was a long silence on the other side of the door.

"Is this about what I said yesterday?"

"What did you say?"

There was the sound of knuckles sliding down the door. "Come on, don't make me say it again."

Daniel stared at the tiled floor. He remembered picking them out when they'd first bought the house. At the time, Amanda had been three months pregnant with Samantha. He'd spent an entire week agonizing over them.

It's the best quality you can buy, the salesman had said. The tiles will last forever.

The color looked faded in the bathroom light.

Johnny let out a long sigh. "Fine. Just give me a call when you're done being weird. I have a meeting at The Arena in half an hour."

Daniel blinked out of his thoughts.

"What? Why?"

"Ron called me. He wants me to go down there, something about this year's Tournament application."

Daniel's eyes narrowed. "What about it?"

“He said you filled out the form wrong.”

“What?” Daniel knew that paper inside and out. “No, I didn’t.”

“That’s what he said. That you filled out the insurance information in the emergency contact section.”

“No way.” Daniel got to his feet and grabbed the door handle. “I’ve filled out that paper so many times that I could do it in my—”

Johnny stepped into his space, as soon as he opened the door.

“Aha, got you,” Johnny said, gaze softening at the sight of him. “You’re so easy sometimes.”

Daniel couldn’t move. Johnny was standing so close to him that he could feel his every breath like a fiery trail against his lips. Fingers wrapped around his wrist, and then he was being pulled down the hallway.

“Come on,” Johnny said, jerking his head sideways. “Let’s go home.”

Daniel’s shoulders slumped.



The car ride was silent on the way home, and Daniel was grateful. He couldn’t stop thinking about the way Johnny had looked at him in the bathroom, could still feel Johnny’s grip like a hot iron band around his wrist.

They rolled into the driveway of Miyagi-do, and Johnny turned off the engine. Daniel got out, taking in the greenery of the backyard, before heading inside the house.

When he stepped into the living room, he allowed himself for the first time to look around. What he saw made his heart sink.

It looked like a home. It looked *lived in*. There were stuff lying around: a magazine on the sofa, a pair of glasses on the coffee table, a bonsai tree in the corner of the room. His eyes darted all over the place, taking in every detail.

Johnny removed his shoes at the entrance and dropped his keys onto the table. His movements were slow, like he was giving Daniel a chance to come forward and say something.

“I’m not feeling so good,” Daniel said, and he felt a stab of guilt when Johnny straightened his back and frowned. “I think I’m gonna go inside and rest.”

Johnny nodded slowly. “Yeah, sure. Just let me—”

He drew closer, closer. Daniel went still, as a hand wrapped around the back of his neck, and another pressed against his forehead. There was a small crease between Johnny’s eyebrows.

“You don’t seem to have a fever,” Johnny said, dropping his hand. “But yeah, you should probably sleep off that hangover from last night. You look a little pale.”

Daniel swallowed. “Yeah.”

He took a step back, and headed to the room, his heart pounding in his chest. He shut the door closed behind him and leaned against it. He could hear Johnny’s voice, like he was talking on the phone. This was surreal. Completely and utterly surreal.

He was living with Johnny, and they were—*together*.

There had to be another explanation. He squeezed his eyes shut, and thought hard. There *had* to be.

Maybe they were just roommates.

Platonic roommates.

Daniel opened his eyes. It was possible, wasn’t it? The house was small, and they could have needed the second room for storage. He could picture it now: Johnny getting an eviction notice for his house, Daniel being a good guy, offering him a place to stay at Miyagi-do. Out of pity.

He eyed the drawer on Johnny’s side of the bed, and bit his lip uncertainly. There was only one way he could find out for sure. Johnny thought that he was sleeping, so he wasn’t going to come bothering Daniel any time soon.

Daniel walked around the bed, sat down on the mattress and opened the drawer carefully. At first glance, it was a mess. There were movie stubs, a watch, old receipts...

When his eyes landed on a bottle of lube, he shut the drawer quickly and dropped his head back, staring at the ceiling. He breathed slowly, his heart hammering in his chest.

It didn’t mean anything. Maybe Johnny liked spending time alone. He was a human being, wasn’t he? But there was something else next to the bottle—God, there was something else. It was black and round.

He took a deep breath and peeked back inside.

It was a cock ring.

He shut the drawer again and crawled back to his side of the bed. He pulled the cover up to his chin, and stared at the ceiling for a very, very long time.

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He didn’t sleep. He laid in bed for one hour, wondering when the hell his life had turned into a movie. There was only one explanation left—one that he didn’t want to think about.

Daniel was dead, and this was his punishment in the afterlife. The man upstairs was laughing at him. He’d taken one look at Daniel, and thought *Mmh, how to make this one miserable*.

(Is it really punishment, though? Are you saying you’ve never thought of Johnny this way—)

No. He’d never thought of Johnny in any way.

(Not even late at night, thinking about all those times he’d looked at you—)

No. Shut up.

Daniel buried his face into the pillow. He stayed like that for a long time, questioning his every life choice, until a low scraping sound caught his attention. He opened one eye. It was coming from outside. He pulled himself to his feet, and walked to the window.

Johnny was raking leaves, dressed in a t-shirt and gym shorts. Daniel watched him for a few minutes. Johnny went back and forth, pausing every now and then to wipe his forehead with his arm.

Daniel chewed the inside of his cheek. Johnny looked like he'd just gotten started. It was the perfect opportunity for Daniel to check the rest of the house. He needed more information about this universe.

He went to the cupboard and grabbed a jogging suit. Once he put it on, he ventured out into the hallway and started with the most obvious rooms. A quick peek into the bathroom showed that there were two toothbrushes, two bath towels, two sets of toiletries.

Then, he went to the living room, where he inspected every little corner. If this was a joke, it was very elaborate. He examined the books on the shelf (*a mix of Sports Illustrated* and *Sukiya Living*), the CD collection in the cabinet (*Metallica*, *Guns 'N' Roses*, *AC/DC*). He even went as far as checking the Netflix account on TV, but both their names were written there, clear as day.

Though Daniel narrowed his eyes when he saw that his profile photo was Boss Baby and Johnny's was a flattering close-up of Johnny Bravo. He turned off the TV and replaced the remote control on the coffee table, before continuing his search through the room.

There was a desk in the corner. He checked the drawer, and found a photograph of Johnny and him standing in front of the beach. They were smiling brightly at the camera, with an arm around each other. They looked happy.

Daniel returned the picture back in the drawer, and moved onto the filing cabinet. He rifled through the papers: doctor's notes, insurance forms, old invoices. His eyes widened when he landed on divorce papers.

He took them out quickly, and looked at the top of the page. They were filed on February 6th, 2019.

Daniel scrambled his mind, trying to recall what had happened on that date. It was six months after the school fight. Six months after Robby had pushed Miguel over the rail, and Daniel's entire world had turned upside down. It was also the moment he'd started having marriage problems.

What had happened in this world, that had caused him to get divorced?

He returned the papers back where he found them, and headed to the kitchen. There was a letter on the counter. He picked it up, and looked at it.

It was addressed to *Johnny Lawrence C/O Daniel LaRusso at Miyagi-Do*.

"How are you feeling?" a voice said behind him.

Daniel pushed the envelope out of reach and turned around. Johnny was standing at the door, his face smudged with dirt, and sweat stains on his shirt.

"Good," Daniel said, his heart racing in his chest.

Johnny raised an eyebrow like he didn't believe him. He walked in slowly, and washed his hands in the sink. Then, he opened the fridge, and took out a bag of bread, cheese, pickles, mayo. Daniel watched him from where he was glued to the counter.

"Did you work on next week's lesson plans?" Johnny asked.

So, they *did* run the dojo together. Daniel's mouth went so dry that he had to swallow before he spoke.

"No."

"I was thinking we could teach them an arm and leg combo on Monday," Johnny said, as he took out four slices of bread. "Get them started on more complex moves, so that they can improve on their speed."

Johnny started buttering the bread with mayonnaise, his biceps flexing with every move.

Daniel was transfixed.

"Yeah, that sounds good," he said.

"Great," Johnny said, adding the pickles. He licked his fingers when he was done. "Anthony asked me if he could join classes in September."

That caught Daniel's attention. He blinked at Johnny.

"What?"

"Yeah," Johnny said, his lips quirking up. "Last Sunday at dinner. He saw that you kept saying no, so he came to me instead."

Daniel frowned. Why would he tell Anthony no in the first place?

"What did you say?" Daniel asked.

Johnny shrugged, as he added the slices of cheese to the sandwich. "I told him that I'd talk to you about it. We were thinking about splitting the beginner's class, right? If we do, I don't mind having him join me."

Then, he put away all the ingredients. Daniel was still reeling over the information, that he jumped when Johnny appeared in front of him with a sandwich on a plate.

"Think about it," Johnny said.

Daniel looked at the plate.

"You didn't have breakfast today. Take it."

He took it. Johnny winked at him and took a big bite of his own sandwich before going back outside.

It turned out Daniel was as meticulous in this world than the last. His notes were lengthy and detailed.

He went through past lesson plans, and discovered that they gave classes at three different levels: beginners, intermediary and advanced. The advanced students were the ones who were going to train in this year's Tournament.

There was a plan for each class, that was then cross-referenced with a progression sheet for each student. Every now and then, he'd find red scribbles in the margins, like *heel kick before knee* or *add sparring session*. The handwriting wasn't his, so he guessed it was Johnny's.

He had good ideas too. Whereas Daniel seemed to be more analytical in his plans, Johnny actually paid attention to the in-class progress of the students. If he thought that they hadn't fully assimilated one of the lessons, he added fifteen minutes of catch-up onto the next lesson.

Daniel saw that he hadn't finished this Monday's plan. So, he picked up a pen, and started adding notes to the notebook. It was surprising how easy it was for him to jump into the exercise, almost like he'd been doing it all his life.

Halfway through, he got a call from Ron. He picked up the phone without a second thought. They talked about Ron's wife, his kids, the upcoming tournament, the new dojo on Victory Boulevard. With ink on his fingers and a friendly voice in his ear, Daniel almost forgot where he was. It's only when Ron asked "How's Johnny by the way?" that his chest tightened in anxiety. He shut the phone soon after.

Around six o'clock, his stomach started grumbling. He put down the pen and thought. All he wanted to do was go lock himself in the bedroom for a good night's sleep. But he'd hardly eaten all day, and most importantly, he needed to talk to Johnny. Find out more about this universe.

He went to the kitchen, and after some rummaging, discovered that there were enough ingredients to make a cajun chicken pasta. He took out two bell peppers, onions, garlic, chicken and got to work. It didn't take long before the sauce was simmering and it was time to add the chicken and boil the pasta.

He was in the midst of pouring the cooked spaghetti into the sauce, when Johnny walked into the kitchen.

Daniel felt a sigh brush against his ear.

"Why do you do this to me?" Johnny asked.

"Do what?" Daniel asked, trying to ignore the way Johnny was standing close to him. One step back, and their bodies would be flush.

Thankfully, Johnny retreated and went on to set the table.

"You know what," Johnny said. There was the sound of metal hitting the table. "Add the green stuff."

Daniel rolled his eyes. "The green stuff is where all the vitamins are—"

"Stored, and where I'm going to get my nutrients. Yeah, yeah," he said, like they'd had this discussion hundreds of times before.

Daniel was so surprised that he didn't react when Johnny came and took the dish from his hands.

After a few seconds, he snapped out of it and sat down at the table, opposite Johnny.

"I'm so glad I finished with the backyard," Johnny said, serving them both. His hair was curled in wet strands around his neck, and his face red from the sun. "It's been bugging me all week. Did you advance on the lesson plan?"

"Yeah, I finished it for the entire week."

"Great. Now, you won't have to worry about it."

Daniel hummed, and took a bite of the pasta. They ate in silence for a few minutes. He wanted to ask questions about their life together, but he couldn't stop staring at Johnny's face. It looked flaming hot in the kitchen light.

"Why are you staring at me?" Johnny asked around a mouthful of food. A bit of spaghetti fell out.

"You're an idiot," Daniel said, the words falling out before he could control them.

"*I'm* an idiot? You're the one who's looking at me like I'm the second coming."

"What? That's not—that's not why I'm looking at you."

"Then, why are you?"

"Because you look like a stupid tomato. You spent all day outside in the sun. Did you even put sunscreen?"

"Here we go."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"You know who doesn't need sunscreen? Captain America."

"*What?*"

"Yeah. In the movie, he spends all day outside, wearing a mask in the sun, and he doesn't even get a tan line around the mouth. Why is that?"

"What does that have to do with *anything*—"

And before he knew it, they were bickering over the realism of the entire Captain America franchise. It was such a *ridiculous* thing to be discussing. Daniel wasn't even sure that Johnny had watched all the movies, because he kept saying things like "that emo guy" or "the chick with the great rack."

Daniel was relieved when the conversation puttered out—he was about to ask questions about the dojo, when Johnny mentioned that Robocop didn't need sunscreen either, and that turned into an entirely different debate, about how robots were going to take over the world.

By the time they were done eating, it was already nine o'clock and Daniel's eyes were hurting from rolling so hard. He leaned back and groaned.

Johnny went to the fridge and grabbed a bottle of beer.

"You look tired," he said, cracking it open and taking a pull.

Daniel rubbed his eyes with the heels of his hands.

“I really am,” he said, feeling the beginning of another tension headache. He should have taken an Advil in the morning. Now, he was going to have pain in his neck for the next two days.

There was a pause, during which he could hear Johnny sit back down.

“It probably has to do with your freak-out from this morning.”

Daniel dropped his hands. Johnny had placed the bottle on the table, and was dragging his thumb through the condensation, his blue eyes focused on Daniel.

He was trying to act nonchalant, but there was a stiffness in his shoulders.

“Yeah, I’m sorry about that,” Daniel said slowly. “I got confused.”

“About what?”

For a crazy second, he considered telling Johnny. *I’m not who you think I am. I come from a different universe, one where you hate me and want nothing to do with me.*

But he couldn’t. Johnny wouldn’t understand.

“It’s complicated,” Daniel said.

Johnny looked like he wanted to push it, but he just pressed his lips together and nodded. He pulled himself to his feet and started gathering the dirty dishes. Daniel got up to help him.

“No, it’s fine,” Johnny said, placing a hand on Daniel’s wrist. “Just go rest.”

He turned his back and started rinsing the dishes in the sink. Daniel hovered around him, unsure. There was a tense line in Johnny’s shoulders, one that made him think he’d said the wrong thing.

After a while, he went inside. He didn’t know what else to say, and Johnny was right about one thing. This morning’s events had worn him out, and he couldn’t think properly anymore.

He went to take a hot shower. As he lathered himself up, he tried really hard not to freak out at the trail of hickeys on his chest. He hurried to wash away the suds, and turned off the water. Afterward, he brushed his teeth and threw on pyjamas that were hung behind the door.

It was still early, so he didn’t expect to find Johnny already in bed, dressed in boxers and a t-shirt. He was reading a magazine.

Daniel eyed the door of the bedroom. He was about to suggest that he go sleep on the sofa, when he noticed that Johnny was biting the corner of his lip—almost like he was anticipating Daniel’s rejection. Daniel shifted on his feet and made a split-second decision.

He climbed into bed and turned his back to Johnny, pulling the cover up to his chin. He stayed tense for a long time, but Johnny continued to flip the pages of his magazine. When five minutes passed and still nothing happened, Daniel started to breathe easier.

The day wasn’t so bad, all things considered. There were moments when he’d actually forgotten that he was in the wrong universe. Conversation with Johnny was easy—enjoyable even. Even when they were bickering.

It was too bad that it had to end this way. Though he felt like there was something else going on,

something that Johnny wasn't telling him.

Daniel remembered the question in the bathroom.

Is this about what I said yesterday?

He had a feeling it had something to do with that.

Winded Path

The next morning was a Sunday. Daniel woke up with a long line of heat against his back, and a nose buried in his neck.

He breathed in, breathed out.

With slow hands, he pulled Johnny's arms from around his waist, only for the grip to tighten and for Johnny to grind his hips into Daniel's ass.

"Johnny," Daniel said, and his voice sounded strangled. "I need to get up."

Johnny grunted in question.

"Up," Daniel repeated.

Johnny took a deep breath, before releasing it. He kissed the back of Daniel's head. "Sorry."

The second Johnny let go of him, Daniel shot to his feet and went to the bathroom. He could see Johnny flop on his side of the bed just as he closed the door.

Daniel leaned forward with his hands on the edges of the sink, and tried to slow down his racing heartbeat.

He didn't expect Johnny to sleep so close to him, and the lingering warmth in his back told him that it had happened for longer than he suspected. He turned on the faucet and splashed cold water on his face. Afterward, he dried his face and stared at himself in the mirror.

For some reason, standing here in the early morning, with fluorescent light shining in his face: the realization hit him harder and with greater clarity.

He and Johnny were together. Like *together* together.

The more he thought about it, the less sense it made. Yes, they had a lot in common, but how could they have possibly recovered from the events of the school fight? What about everything that had happened before? There was a lot of history there: childhood rivalry, ex-girlfriends, opposing philosophies. Daniel shook his head and headed out to the kitchen.

This time, he didn't waste time before making breakfast. It gave him time to think about what he was going to do. He couldn't stay here forever. He needed to find a way back to his old life.

What life? Your silent, angry wife? You two were barely talking anymore. Your resentful children? They blamed you for everything. You were a failure in their eyes.

Daniel smashed the egg into the pan, not caring that some of the shell ended up inside, and fried some sausage on the side. Ten minutes later, Johnny shuffled into the kitchen with bleary eyes and poured himself some coffee. Daniel prepared two plates for them, and they sat down together to eat.

His stomach was tight with nerves. He needed to make sense of what was going on. Maybe if he reminded Johnny how much they hated each other, he'd suddenly realize that they shouldn't be living together.

"Remember when we used to fight all the time?" Daniel asked, moving the eggs around his plate.

Well, nobody ever said Daniel was subtle.

“We used to really have it in for each other, man,” Daniel continued. “It was crazy.”

“Yeah,” Johnny said, shoveling a piece of sausage into his mouth. Sauce dripped onto his chin.

“All those things we did to each other. The dick on the billboard, raising the rent.” He paused for effect. “Setting your car on fire.”

Johnny hummed with his mouth full. What the hell was going on? Why wasn’t he reacting like Daniel was expecting?

“I poached your students,” Daniel insisted.

“Yeah, remember that?” Johnny said, and if anything, his lips curled a little, like he was remembering fond memories.

Daniel stared at him.

Eventually, Johnny swallowed and started talking about what he was going to do during the day.

“How about you get some work done in the shed?” Johnny asked him.

“Yeah, okay,” Daniel said tiredly.

What was the point of fighting him, anyway?

They got dressed. Johnny went to the garage to take care of the cars, while Daniel went to the garden shed. He didn’t know what he expected, but it definitely wasn’t this.

The place was *beautiful*. The walls were entirely lined with bonsai trees, and there was a wooden desk on his left, that gave off a rustic vibe. It was so different from the sleek lines of his garden shed at home.

Daniel walked inside, and examined the trees. They were well kept in the shade, but their leaves were browning with the season. The sight of them reinvigorated something inside of Daniel. With renewed determination, he sat down, picked up the shears and got to work.

The repetitive movement allowed him to soothe his nerves. It was calming, and reminded him of the summer he’d spent with Mr. Miyagi, learning how to bring balance into his life.

As time passed, he started to go over all the conversations that he’d had with Johnny so far. They hadn’t talked a lot about this universe, but there was one thing that he couldn’t stop thinking about —

Why hadn’t Daniel wanted Anthony to join Miyagi-Do?

In his old life, he would have given *anything* to have Anthony learn karate. He’d always held that hope inside of him, that one day his son would show an interest in the art. That was until the school fight had happened and ruined any chance of them having a good relationship.

At one o’clock, Daniel went inside to get lunch. There was already a sandwich and an apple waiting for him on the counter. He ate them, before going back to the shed.

Somehow, it gave him mental energy to do something about his uncertainties. Johnny mentioned that Anthony had gone to camp for the entire month of June, so Daniel couldn’t call him and ask.

But there was somebody else he could talk to, somebody much closer.

He fished his phone out of his pocket and scrolled through his contacts until he landed on the name that he wanted. It was the only way. He pressed on Call.

“Hello?” the voice said in his ear, and Daniel’s heart warmed immediately.

“Hey, Sam,” he said, smiling. “How are you?”

“Oh hey, Dad! I’m good. Just on my way to meet a friend for lunch.” There was the sound of traffic behind her. “Everything okay?”

“Yeah. Everything’s great. I missed you.”

He hadn’t realized how much until now. In his universe, his Samantha didn’t even talk to him anymore.

This Samantha laughed.

“Dad, we saw each other last Sunday.”

“I know, I’m sorry. How’s class?”

“Good, I have an English Lit exam tomorrow morning. I can’t wait for all this to be over so I can finally go on vacation.”

“When do you finish?”

“In three weeks.”

“How about you come over here, spend a week-end when you’re done?”

“Really? Like a sleep-over?” Samantha asked in surprise.

“Yeah, it’ll be fun.”

“Wow. Thanks, Dad.” She sounded genuinely happy. “Too bad Anthony won’t be here.”

At the mention of Anthony, Daniel shifted in his seat. “Yeah, about that. You know when you came over for dinner...” It felt weird saying the words, when he had no recollection of the event.

“Anthony asked me if he could join Miyagi-Do.”

“Well, duh, Dad. He’s been wanting to join for a while now.”

“Did he talk to you about it?”

“Yeah, he was kind of upset that you said no, and to be honest, I kind of understand him. I know how difficult he was at first, blaming you for what happened with mom, and then you know... Johnny. It wasn’t easy.”

“He really had a problem with that, huh?” Daniel asked, staring down at the bonsai.

“Yeah, but he’s moved on. He really likes Johnny now, you should give him a chance.” There was a sound of someone greeting her in the background. “Sorry, Dad. My friend just got here. Talk to you later?”

“Yeah, honey. Good bye, I love you.”

“Love you too.”

Daniel shut the phone and stared at the screen. He’d thought he’d get more information. All he’d done was get more confused.



Daniel spent the rest of the afternoon, working in the shed. He repotted three of the trees that had problems with drainage. It wasn’t the ideal season to do it, but he didn’t have any other choice. Then, he returned to pruning.

Sometime around four o’clock, Johnny showed up with grease stains on his shirt.

“Hey,” Johnny said, as he sat down on the stool by Daniel’s side. He grabbed a pair of shears and pulled a bonsai tree in front of him.

“How was work?”

“Good,” Johnny said, running his fingers through the leaves with one hand. “I tuned up your car. I still need to change the air filter though. I’ll do that next week.”

“Thank you,” Daniel said, surprised. He watched as Johnny flexed the shears experimentally in his hand. “Hey, if you need any help—”

His mouth snapped shut, when Johnny started clipping. It seemed like Johnny didn’t need him. He was *good*. Daniel analyzed the position of his hand, the flexibility of his wrist. He even knew how to avoid cutting the branch at the root.

“You’re really good,” Daniel said. The words fell out of his mouth, and he wanted to slap himself. He sounded so stupid.

Johnny’s eyes shined with mirth, as he continued to trim the tree.

“Yeah, well I learned from the best.”

Daniel’s chest tightened, and his eyes dropped to his own bonsai. For a split-second, an image flashed through his mind. His chest to Johnny’s back, talking in a low voice as he directed Johnny’s wrist around the bonsai.

He felt his face go red. He cut off a dead branch, but he was distracted now. How much longer was he going to stay here? He couldn’t go on like this forever, he needed to go back. But with every hour that passed, he wondered if he was ever going to return to his old life.

He thought of Amanda, Samantha and Anthony in the other universe. Did they still exist? Did they realize that Daniel had disappeared? Were they searching for him? Unless—

No, it wasn’t possible.

But he couldn’t stop thinking about it, it was stronger than him.

Unless Daniel was somehow still *there*. Another version of him, living life normally with his wife and kids. Maybe nobody had even noticed he was gone. The thought was terrifying, and the more he focused on it, the more he felt his breath quicken.

He could tell the moment Johnny noticed something was off. He slowed down his movements, and looked at him with a small frown. It only made things worst.

Daniel dropped the shears on the table, and leaned forward on his elbows, burying his face in his hands. He could feel the panic attack coming on. It was getting stronger, and stronger.

“Did I ever tell you what I did after the Tournament?” Johnny’s voice pierced through the haze.

Daniel couldn’t breathe. His fingers were tingling, his face felt numb. It took him a while to register Johnny’s words.

“What?” Daniel asked, panting.

“After the Tournament in ‘84,” Johnny said, and Daniel tried to concentrate on the words. “After what happened with... After what happened in the parking lot.”

He paused for a few seconds, and Daniel felt like he was on the edge of a cliff. A hand landed on his neck, and he almost jumped out of his skin.

Slowly, the fingers started to massage the tense muscles there.

“I went on the beach and just... stayed there for hours.” Johnny continued, his voice sounding closer. His knee nudged against Daniel’s. “Trying to wrap my head around what had happened. I walked around until it was close to midnight, and then when I had no more energy to walk, I went home. My mom was still up. She took one look at me, and...” He trailed off.

“And what?” Daniel asked, dropping his hands but still leaning on his elbows. He breathed in and out, letting Johnny’s touch ground him. For some reason, he had the impression Johnny never talked about his mother.

“She didn’t understand why I looked like that,” Johnny said, still moving his fingers. “She kept asking if it was because I’d lost the Tournament. I couldn’t tell her what had happened, so I pretended that it was.”

There was a small pause, and then Johnny snorted.

“She probably knew it wasn’t that. My mom could read me like an open book.” He sounded sad. “But she played along anyway. She made me a bowl of ice-cream.” A smile in his voice. “Vanilla with pieces of chocolate chip inside. It felt like I was ten years old all over again.”

Daniel sat up, and Johnny released him. Daniel immediately missed the warmth. He watched as Johnny returned to his tree.

“Sid was away on a business trip that week, so it was just her and me alone at home. She asked if I wanted to watch a movie, I said Police Academy. We’d just gotten it on VHS. We stayed up until 2 am in the morning watching it. It’s one of my favorite memories with her.”

Daniel thought about a woman with blond hair and blue eyes, with so much love for her son. Somehow, the image of her was soothing.

“Tell me more,” Daniel said.

And so Johnny did. He talked about the time he'd gotten sick during a ski trip at Mountain High, and his mom had stayed with him all day in the cabin. The day Sid had taken away his drum set, and she'd bought him a guitar instead. How she used to sit for hours and watch him do magic tricks with only a deck of cards and a hat.

It took Daniel a while to understand that she'd passed away. It added a bittersweet twist to all the memories.

Daniel picked up the shears again, and let Johnny's soft voice wash over him. It was calming, and Daniel found the feeling of panic receding. They spent a really long time, just talking and sharing stories.

When Daniel glanced at his watch again, it was already six o'clock.

"I should probably go make dinner," Daniel said, though he really didn't feel like it.

Johnny turned in his seat. "How about we order some Chinese instead?"

"Yeah?" Daniel said, biting his lip. There was a feeling inside Daniel's chest. "And maybe we could also watch Police Academy?"

Johnny rolled his eyes, but his lips curled into a pleased smile.

He went to shower first, and Daniel followed soon after. When he came into the living room, Johnny was saying good-bye to the delivery boy.

"Looks great," Daniel said, when he saw that Johnny had even ordered him a seaweed salad.

They set out the food on the coffee table and put on Police Academy. Daniel hadn't watched the movie in a long time, and Johnny was apparently a talker. He kept a running commentary on every gag, throwing in small bits of trivia every now and then, about the actors, the characters, the setting. It was *fun*, and Daniel found his sides aching from laughter.

Afterward, they decided to continue with Police Academy 2. It started out the same way as the first, but with their stomachs full and the lights turned off in the living-room, they grew quieter and settled down.

Halfway through the movie, Daniel checked on Johnny. He was sitting with his head stretched back against the sofa, his legs splayed wide open. Daniel traced over his profile: the way the blue light reflected in his eyes, the long slope of his nose, the graceful arc of his throat.

His insides clenched, and he returned to the movie, determined to stay concentrated until the credits rolled. Eventually, the movie ended and they sat in silence for a few moments.

"That was fun," Johnny said. "Wanna watch the next one?"

"I'm too tired," Daniel groaned. "And we need to be up by 8 am."

"Yeah, you're right."

They sank back into a comfortable silence. Daniel thought to himself. He wanted to say something, but he wasn't sure how to approach it. He took a deep breath.

"Thanks," Daniel said, letting his head loll to the side. Johnny turned his head as well. "For everything... I feel better."

“Don’t mention it,” Johnny said, eyes darting all over his face.

“No, really,” Daniel said, his voice even quieter. “I know I’ve been different lately. But... you’ve been really great to me.”

“I’m just glad you’re feeling better,” Johnny said, shrugging.

Daniel nodded slowly. The longer they stayed like that, the more he became aware of their closeness, their shoulders pressed together and Johnny’s face only a few inches away from his.

Johnny’s eyes dropped to his lips, and Daniel’s stomach tightened. *He thinks you’re partners. It’s normal that he wants to kiss you.*

The way Johnny was looking at him though, like Daniel was all he ever wanted. Daniel felt like his heart was going to beat its way out of his chest. He couldn’t do this, not now. He needed to find a way to change the direction of the evening—*pronto*.

Daniel clapped his hands once, making Johnny jump in his seat.

“Uhm,” Daniel said, because he hadn’t thought further than that.

Johnny raised his eyebrows.

“Let’s go to sleep?” Daniel asked weakly.

Johnny’s eyes darted all over his face again, like he was trying to figure him out. Daniel stayed still, his heart racing in his chest. Then, Johnny nodded. He turned off the television and got up.

“I’ll see you in bed,” Johnny said, before heading inside.

Daniel waited for the sound of a door closing, before he buried his face in his hands and let out a shaky breath.

He had to remind himself that this wasn’t his real life. He had a wife and kids at home. They were waiting for him.

They *had* to be.

Somehow, the words sounded hollow in his mind.



Monday finally arrived, and it was time for the first class of the week. Daniel would be lying if he said he wasn’t a little excited. He hadn’t been in a dojo for so long, it was almost like Christmas morning.

“Welcome,” Daniel said, when the first student appeared. He waved him in excitedly. “Come in, come in! You’re ten minutes early, but the early bird catches the worm, right?”

The student, a pimply fifteen year old, shifted on his feet. “Yeah.”

“We’re going to have a great lesson today. Lots of new stuff to learn.”

“O-kay,” the kid said.

He went to the corner of the room to drop his bag.

“Perfect,” Daniel said. “It’s the perfect place to drop your bag.”

Johnny jostled him with his shoulder.

“Can you stop being weird?” Johnny muttered from the corner of his mouth.

Daniel’s face was hurting from smiling so much. “What?”

“If you smile any brighter, NASA is gonna come investigating.”

Daniel shoved him away, but made an effort to tone it down after that. Eventually, all the students arrived, around twenty of them, and they started class. They did warm-ups first, before moving to the lesson of the day: a crescent kick, followed by a circular punch.

He expected to get strange looks during class. But the students didn’t find it weird that they were being taught by two grown men who also happened to live together.

So, Daniel rolled his shoulders and let himself relax into the lesson. It felt really good. Class was the one place where Daniel was in his element. He could finally clear his mind and concentrate on something worth while.

Johnny was a good teacher, too. Daniel watched him as he made his way through the class, correcting moves, readjusting stances. Daniel had thought they’d be butting heads the entire time, but Johnny let Daniel control the flow of the lesson. It made Daniel feel in charge.

Soon, the beginner’s class was over and it was time to have lunch. They went inside and reheated leftover Chinese food.

“Perfect,” Johnny said, as they sat down. “It’s the perfect place to eat Chinese food.”

Daniel kicked him under the table. Johnny ribbed him a while longer, before moving the conversation to the students. He tried to play it tough, but it was so obvious that he liked them, his eyes crinkling even as he talked about them. It made Daniel’s chest feel warm inside.

After lunch, they went back to dojo and continued with the advanced class. The students were older, more experienced. Daniel let himself be a bit harder on them.

Everything was going great until Johnny called him from across the room.

“Sensei LaRusso, would you help me demonstrate a defense against the hammerfist punch?”

Daniel’s eyes darted around him, before shrugging. “Okay.”

He approached Johnny and got into position, facing him. Johnny’s eyes glinted in the distance.

Daniel twisted his hip and threw a punch. Johnny blocked it with his forearm, before grabbing Daniel by the wrist and twisting his arm, until his back was flush against Johnny’s chest.

“See, you don’t want to spend too much time on the defense, more on the attack. When your opponent strikes, you need to be two steps ahead.”

He was a hard wall of muscle against Daniel, his wide chest vibrating as he spoke. Daniel flushed.

“Again,” Johnny ordered.

He set Daniel back into place. Daniel hoped that his face didn’t look as red as it felt. They did the demonstration again, except this time, Johnny’s grip was tighter around his arm.

“Am I clear?” Johnny asked the class.

“Yes, Sensei,” the students said in unison.

“Good.” He rubbed his thumb against Daniel’s wrist and released him slowly. “Now, pair up with a partner and show me what you got.”

The kids scattered before consolidating into small groups. Daniel went to the front of the class, and tried to calm down his racing heartbeat. He could feel Johnny’s eyes following him around, like little laser beams.

It was a good thing that the students hadn’t noticed anything off. They continued to work on their defense for another fifteen minutes, until Johnny called them in line to wind down. They did a few stretching exercises before the end of class.

The students thanked them and then straggled out, one by one.

“It was a good class,” Johnny said, picking up forgotten water bottles off the mat.

“Yeah, it was really nice.”

“I haven’t seen you this dynamic in a while.”

“Really?” Daniel asked.

Johnny hummed. “Yeah, usually you go easy on them. Now, you’re like speedy Gonzales dressed in a gi.”

“Oh, shut up.”

“Like the energizer bunny with a headband.”

“You’re such an ass,” Daniel said, finally chuckling. He was about to leave when a hand caught him by the wrist and he was pulled against a hard chest. Arms wrapped around his waist, and Daniel only had a split-second to see blue eyes getting closer, before lips descended hungrily on him.

Daniel’s mouth opened on impact and Johnny’s tongue pushed into his mouth, firm and strong. Daniel clutched the lapels of Johnny’s gi, and moaned in his throat, his stomach tightening in heat. Johnny took it as a prompt to kiss him deeper, sucking on his tongue before exploring the roof of his mouth. Daniel didn’t know how long they kissed, but it felt like an eternity.

When Johnny released him, they were both panting. Daniel’s heart was pounding against his rib cage, and his head was spinning.

Johnny watched him, his Adam’s apple bobbing as he swallowed. There was a quietness surrounding him. That’s when Daniel realized Johnny was waiting for him to say something.

“I need some time,” Daniel croaked.

There was a long silence, during which they just looked at each other. Daniel’s hands were still in

Johnny's jacket, their hips pressed to one another.

Johnny took a deep breath, before nudging him with his forehead.

"Yeah, I figured," Johnny said softly. He gave Daniel a lingering kiss on the cheek, before releasing him and going inside.

When the door closed, Daniel let out a shaky breath and covered his face with his hands. That was—that was the most amazing kiss he'd ever had.

They had dinner later in the evening. The conversation was stilted and a bit awkward. Daniel hated it, but he didn't know what else to do, what else to *say*—not when there was still a heat in the pit of his stomach, curling its way around his spine.

That night, Daniel climbed into bed and turned his back to Johnny as he usually did.

Daniel remembered all the times he'd thought about Johnny, a mix of fear and arousal swirling in his gut. The shame he'd carried with him every day in high school, the one that had settled deep inside his bones the moment he'd laid eyes on blond hair and blue eyes.

It was the same shame that had reared its ugly head when Johnny had showed up at LaRusso Auto thirty-four years later. It was difficult to let go of this feeling, especially when it had defined him for so long. For a moment, he wondered if Johnny had ever doubted himself this way, but it didn't seem possible, not when he seemed so comfortable in their relationship.

So why was Daniel over-thinking everything? This was a second chance for him to live the life he'd always wanted. A life free of shame, free of guilt.

Why did Daniel feel the need to hide himself?



It seemed like they both had a different understanding of "needing time".

After that night, it was like a dam broke. Johnny kissed him again on Tuesday before dinner, and then on Wednesday after their lunch break. Daniel thought that Johnny was going to skip Thursday, but then he was caught in a ninja lip-lock right before going to bed.

The kisses started to get more and more heated with each passing day, and Daniel couldn't find it in himself to say no, not when Johnny seemed to take all the space out of his head with the press of his lips.

Not when it was so obvious how much Johnny *knew* him. It was like Johnny had a road map to Daniel's body, and he'd learned to navigate it with his eyes closed. He knew how to make Daniel go breathless just by wrapping a strong arm around his waist, make him shiver by sucking at the base of his throat.

Daniel didn't have memories of Johnny in this universe, but his body responded to Johnny like it was made for him.

It was different from Amanda, where it was a constant push and pull all day, full of angry looks and snide comments. His relationship with Johnny was easy. They were like two bodies falling into

orbit, gravitating around each other, and soon, he found himself settling into a routine.

Daniel discovered a lot of things about Johnny during the next two weeks, things that he never would have expected.

First of all, he was close to Robby and Miguel. It seemed that the rough patch had passed, and they'd made peace with each other. Both kids had gone off to college, but they still kept in touch with Johnny. Daniel heard him talking to them on the phone every now and then, his laughter echoing all the way through the house.

Second, Johnny enjoyed moving a lot. He had a training regimen that he followed every morning to the dot. Twenty push-ups, forty crunches and forty squats. On the days where there were no classes, he spent most of the day outside working in the backyard or in the garage. He was in good shape, too. Daniel caught sight of him a few times, stepping out of the shower with only a towel around his waist.

Which led Daniel to his third realization, this time about himself.

It was getting harder to resist Johnny.

It was a Saturday night, nearly two weeks into this new life, when Daniel finally broke down. They'd just finished doing housework, and were getting ready for dinner when Johnny pulled him in for a kiss.

He could tell this time that it was different. It was tinged with heat and desperation, Johnny crowding him against the wall of the living room, pressing their arousals together. Daniel found himself just as desperate, weeks of tension building inside of him and ready to snap.

This time, when a hand dropped to his belt, Daniel moaned in approval. Deft fingers unbuckled him, and shoved his jeans down his thighs. Johnny released his lips, chest heaving before dropping down to his knees. Hands pulled down the waistband of his boxers, and before he knew it, a warm mouth was swallowing him whole.

Daniel knocked his head back against the door, and moaned. Johnny bobbed his head like he'd done it countless times before, every now and then sucking on the tip before swallowing him down to root, and Daniel couldn't breathe. He buried his fingers into Johnny's hair, holding onto him, yet at the same falling apart.

He managed to let out a warning just as he was about to come. Johnny didn't care. He took Daniel deeper, deeper, until his nose was buried in the hairs at the base of his cock. His throat fluttered around the head, Daniel's stomach went rock hard as he came. He held onto Johnny's hair, and rolled his hips with the aftershock.

Then, he went still and collapsed against the door, panting. Johnny wiped his mouth with his wrist and got to his feet. He pulled Daniel into a kiss that was more breathing than tongue.

When Daniel reached for his buckle, a hand clasped tightly around his wrist.

"I already came," Johnny said in a rough voice.

Daniel shivered, and kissed him again. The smell of Johnny was masculine and intimate—it wrapped around Daniel, leaving him in a cocoon of warmth.

Once again, it was so different from Amanda. He'd never been in such a carefree relationship before. There was no drama, no strings attached.

They were just two men living together, fulfilling each other in every way that mattered.

Things were *good* between them.

Or at least that's what he thought until they went to Bobby's house on the 4th of July.

Destiny Of Stars

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It was a beautiful day, the sun casting a glare on the grass below, and a warm breeze sifting through the air. Daniel stood in a corner of the backyard, nursing a beer by himself. He wasn't *shy* exactly. It was just so overwhelming to see so many people at once. They swarmed around Bobby's backyard like little ants.

Daniel took a sip of beer, enjoying the cold feel of the bottle against his lips. They still tingled from the heated kiss that Johnny had given him in the car. The way Johnny had leaned back, his breath shaky and his fist clenched against his thigh like it was taking all his willpower to control himself. Daniel had climbed out of the car then and there, because he didn't trust himself not to tell Johnny to gun it home.

The memory of Johnny's lips still made his body go hot. He went to the buffet, and grabbed the last canape of smoked salmon and cream cheese. He placed it carefully in his mouth, and turned toward the crowd.

That's when he noticed Amanda across the backyard. They'd exchanged pleasantries at his arrival. Now, she was dancing with Anoush, smiling and laughing, and he felt something tug deep inside of him. She looked *happy*. Daniel couldn't remember the last time he'd seen her this way. In his old world, it was like all the life had drained from her.

He looked away, not sure how to feel about it. He knew that they'd had their fair share of problems, but it still hurt to think that he hadn't been good enough for her.

At that moment, the sight of golden hair caught his eye. Johnny was at the barbecue stand, wearing an apron that said *Kiss The Sensei*. He was flipping a burger patty with one hand, and drinking a beer with the other. Jimmy was next to him, talking animatedly and his face lighting up every few seconds in a giddy expression.

Daniel's chest pulsed when Johnny threw his head back, laughing.

A movement on his left pulled him out of his thoughts. He turned around just in time to see Bobby sidling closer. "Hey."

"Hey," Daniel said, glancing at him. It was so weird that he was friends with Bobby Brown now.

"How are you?" Bobby asked.

"Good, thanks. It's a great house that you got here."

Bobby smiled. "Yeah? You gonna say that every time you come here?"

Daniel's face went red. Right, he'd been here before.

"I like it," Bobby continued. "But it's gonna get a bit lonely with the kids going off to college."

"How old are they already?"

"15 and 17."

“They grow so fast, huh?”

Bobby smiled and then they fell into silence. It was slightly awkward. Daniel didn’t know what else to say. He was grateful when a server passed by at that moment, serving more canape. He grabbed one and placed it in his mouth, just as Bobby said—

“So, Johnny wants to marry you, huh?”

Daniel inhaled sharply, the canape lodging itself into his throat, and started choking. Bobby hurried to clap him on the back—Daniel struggled for air, until Bobby took one large swing and hit him *hard*.

The chewed piece propelled itself out of his throat and onto the grass. Daniel coughed, and took a gasping breath.

“It’s okay, he’s fine,” Bobby yelled out. Daniel looked up through blurry eyes, just in time to see Johnny with his hands on his sides, looking like he was two seconds away from charging over.

“I’m fine,” Daniel said loudly, but it came out garbled. He waved at Johnny in a sign that he was okay. Johnny sank his teeth into his lower lip, and turned back to the barbecue. But he kept throwing angry looks in Daniel’s direction, like he was *mad* at him for choking.

Bobby clapped him one more time on the back, before releasing him.

“I’m sorry,” he said quietly. “Please don’t be angry with him. He just needed someone to talk to, and I was there.”

Daniel took a tissue from a nearby table and wiped his mouth.

“No, no,” Daniel said, before clearing his throat. “I’m not angry. What else did he tell you?”

Bobby shifted on his feet. “He said that it was something he’d been thinking about for a while. But when he talked to you about it, you sort of shut him down.”

“Shit,” Daniel said, wadding up the tissue into a ball. He remembered Johnny that day in the bathroom, the hurt in his voice.

Is this about what I said yesterday?

“Listen, I’m not going to pretend I understand what you’re going through,” Bobby said. “I know how hard it is to be true to yourself. Johnny had years to accept who he was. But...”

Daniel looked at him. “But what?”

Bobby bit his lip. “Johnny likes to pretend that everything is okay, because he doesn’t want to pressure you. But I know him, okay? I know what kind of life he’s had. You’re maybe the best thing that’s happened to him in a long time. I just don’t want to see him get hurt.”

Daniel stared at the grass. He didn’t want to hurt Johnny either. God, they’d only been living together for one month, and it was the happiest Daniel had ever been.

A hand dropped on his shoulder. “I’m not expecting you to make a decision. I just want you to think about what I said.” A voice called out from inside the house, and Bobby’s head turned. “I gotta go. My wife is calling.”

Bobby walked toward the house, leaving him alone.

Daniel looked up, and at that moment, Johnny looked up too. Their eyes met across the backyard. The anger had gone, and now there was just a worried look on Johnny's face. He raised an eyebrow in a clear sign. *Are you okay?* Daniel breathed in, breathed out. He wasn't okay, but he nodded anyway.



The ride home was silent. There was a tension in the air, much like the calm before the storm. Johnny kept clenching and unclenching his hands around the wheel, while Daniel replayed the conversation with Bobby over and over again.

The moment they stepped into the living room, Johnny turned around and caught Daniel in a searing kiss. It was desperate, more teeth than tongue.

"Don't you ever scare me like that again," Johnny growled in-between the kisses.

Daniel nodded. He pulled at the front of Johnny's shirt, and suddenly they were stripping their way to the bedroom. Johnny didn't take off their boxers. He shoved Daniel on the bed, and then crawled on top of him, pressing their hips together. Daniel didn't realize how much he needed the closeness as well. He could still hear Bobby's words echoing in his head.

Fuck, he really cared about Johnny. So what if he'd said no to getting married? Things were good between them. Yeah, the first few days had been weird, but Johnny had gotten over that, right?

He was so absorbed in his thoughts that he was taken by surprise when Johnny rolled onto his back, putting Daniel on top. Johnny was kissing him more softly now, like he'd gotten all the worry out of his system.

He ground his hips up, and slid his hands smoothly down Daniel's back until they reached his ass. Fingers dipped into his boxers, kneading into his skin, getting closer and closer to his—

Daniel made a strangled sound, and his hand whipped around to catch Johnny by the wrist.

"What are you doing?" Daniel asked, breathless.

Johnny's eyes were heavy-lidded. "Getting you warmed up," he rasped, rolling his hips. He dipped in for another kiss, but Daniel pulled back.

"Why would you—" He cut himself off, before swallowing. "Why would you do that?"

"I mean, I could go in unprepped buuut—" Johnny drew out the last word.

In all his panic, Daniel hadn't even *considered* who was the top.

"No, no," he said quickly. "Why don't we do it the other way around?"

"Yeah, right," Johnny snorted. He released Daniel's ass and crossed his hands behind his head.

Daniel sat up on his haunches and narrowed his eyes. "What do you mean—" He made air quotes, "*Yeah, right.*"

Johnny shrugged. "I'm just saying, you've never complained before." He raised an eyebrow. "Too busy moaning like it's your last day."

“Well I’m complaining now,” Daniel said, there was a bite in his tone.

Johnny rolled his head back and stared at the ceiling. The light cast a shadow in the dip of his throat, where sweat glistened in the darkness. He seemed to reach a decision.

“Fine,” Johnny sighed. “If you really want, we could try it the other way around.”

Daniel stared at him. Was he seriously considering sex with Johnny? Kissing was one thing. Handjobs and blowjobs were another. But actual *sex*?

He tried to picture it for a second. Their sweaty bodies joining together, Johnny’s hips snapping into him with every breath. A part of him inside of Daniel, filling him. Maybe Daniel would like it. Maybe he’d even throw his head back and moan. Dig his nails into Johnny’s back, squeeze his thighs around him. Beg him to go harder and harder. Johnny would sink his teeth into his lower lip, and snap his hips so *deep*—

Daniel spaced out. Fingers waved in front of his face, and he blinked. He was hard as rock in his boxers.

Johnny was watching him closely, chewing the inside of his cheek. Daniel leaned forward, and caught him in a searing kiss. “Or how about I give you a blowjob this time?”

Johnny wasn’t going to say no to that.



Bobby was a drama queen, and that was Daniel’s conclusion. So what if Daniel had said no? Johnny was *okay*, wasn’t he?

During the next few days, classes went on as usual, and so did their home routine. Every night, they fooled around and fell asleep, happy and spent. Now that Johnny was getting regular blow jobs, he looked even more relaxed.

Things were good between them, and Bobby didn’t know what the hell he was talking about.

He decided to set all his worries aside when Samantha came over to spend the week-end. Daniel hugged her the moment he saw her. It was so good to finally have her in his arms. She was happier than the Samantha in his old world, and more talkative too.

They spent hours catching up in the living room. Johnny hung out with them at first, until he remembered that he had a few errands to run, so he left. They talked about life in college, classes, friends. At a moment, she asked Daniel about Miyagi-Do, and he discussed their plans to rebrand the dojo.

When Johnny returned, he suggested that they all dine out at an Italian restaurant. Daniel was more than happy to say yes, and as he watched them talk across the table later in the evening—his heart warmed.

Johnny was *good* with Samantha, the way the lines in his face softened around her, and his lips stretched into a smile just for her. He was still his usual self, making fun of her English Lit major at every chance he got, but Samantha was so easy-going. If anything, she seemed amused by his

It was nice and Daniel really enjoyed the dinner, but... there was something off. He couldn't put his finger on what it was exactly, but by Sunday, it was strong enough to have his stomach twist itself into a knot. He watched them closely, trying to figure out what it was.

It's only when Samantha asked Johnny to check the oil in her car and Johnny's eyes searched for Daniel, that the realization hit him.

The entire week-end, Johnny had kept looking at Daniel first. When Samantha asked Johnny if he'd drive her to the store for a quick run, he looked at Daniel. When she said *oh we should totally watch the new Mad Max someday*, he looked at Daniel. Same thing when Johnny suggested she spend next Thanksgiving at their house.

Daniel remembered Bobby's words. *He doesn't want to pressure you.*

Is that what was going on? Was Johnny afraid of bonding with Daniel's kids? But why would he—

His heart jumped in his throat, as the memory came rushing back to him. Anthony wanting to join Miyagi-Do, Daniel refusing. Suddenly, he *understood*. The other Daniel wasn't trying to keep Anthony away from karate. He was trying to keep Anthony away from *Johnny*.

Daniel's heart started hurting. Was this Daniel so hung up on the past that he was scared of letting his kids get close to Johnny?

Johnny was still staring at him with raised eyebrows. He wasn't even aware that he was doing it. Daniel forced a smile onto his face, and Johnny's eyes softened.

“Come on, LaRusso,” Johnny told Samantha. “I’ll teach you how to change the wipers as well.”



Going out for lunch with Lucille was the one thing that hadn't changed in this world. It was on the last Sunday of the month and at the same restaurant, too. A quaint lakeside restaurant on Tampa Avenue that specialized in seafood.

When he arrived, she was already waiting at the table, dressed in jeans and a silk blouse. She stood up at the sight of him.

“Hey Ma,” Daniel said, hugging her tightly. He basked in her warmth for a few seconds, the familiar smell of her perfume.

She pushed him back by the shoulders, her face drawing into a frown. "What's going on?"

“Why would you think something’s going on?” Daniel asked. “I can’t just say hey ma?”

“Daniel,” Lucille said in a meaningful tone.

Daniel licked his lips, and looked away. She always knew how to zero in on his discomfort. He sighed. “Let’s just order first.”

He pulled out a seat for her and then sat down opposite from her. He barely scanned the menu. He

already knew what he was having, and so did she.

Once they'd placed their orders, Lucille leaned forward on her elbows, her earrings swinging with the movement.

"So, are you going to tell me what's going on?"

Daniel's eyes dropped to the table, and he played with the fork by his hand. Now that he was here, he didn't know where to start. The week had been difficult. Johnny not understanding why Daniel was withdrawing, Daniel himself not making sense of their relationship.

"Did you know I liked men?" Daniel asked.

There was a stunned silence.

"Daniel, tell me what's—"

"Ma," he said, looking up to her. "Please just answer."

Her eyes darted all over his face, and her forehead creased into a deeper frown.

"Yes," Lucille said simply.

"Yes?" Daniel repeated, raising his eyebrows. "You knew I liked men before I even got with Johnny?"

"This thing with Johnny didn't start when you first got together." She looked sad. "It was a story in the making from the moment you met in high school."

"What?" Daniel asked, confused.

"I saw the way you talked about him. This wasn't a normal childhood rivalry. It was too *personal*. Then, when you saw him again four years ago." She shook her head. "A part of me wished you'd forgotten him, but I could see it in your eyes. It was like the fire had revived inside of you."

Daniel looked down at the table again.

"What is this about?" Lucille asked. "Did something happen with Johnny? If you tell me exactly what it is, maybe I can help you."

"You can't help me."

"Why?"

"Because you *can't*," Daniel insisted. He was surprised by the rush of emotion in his voice.

"There's something wrong with me. I can't ever seem to be happy."

Lucille's expression shattered, but she stayed silent.

"Even when I have everything," Daniel continued. "I keep pushing Johnny away, and I don't want to. I want to be with him so much, but a part of me is—I think I'm afraid."

He was too afraid of letting Johnny get too close, and this fear was holding him back from being with the only person that he loved.

"Daniel, when you broke up your marriage, everybody was hurt. Amanda, Anthony, Samantha.

Me. But you know what, we all moved on. Amanda found Anoush, the kids have forgiven you. *I've* forgiven you."

"Maybe that's what scares me the most. The fact that everyone seems to have moved on."

"It wasn't easy," Lucille said, shaking her head. "Of course, it wasn't. But you need to let go of that."

"How? How do I even know if I'm doing the right thing?"

"Daniel," Lucille said, placing a hand over his. "You're too hung up on doing things right, when you should really just be looking at yourself. Don't overthink this. Johnny makes you happy, and he cares for you. Isn't that all that matters?"

Daniel took his hand away, and leaned back. She was right. She was so right. He thought about the way Johnny looked at him, like he hung the moon and the stars.

When was the last time Amanda had looked at him like that? He knew what would have been happened if he'd stayed with her: the anger and the resentment all mixing into a cocktail of bottled-up emotions. He could see now that the marriage was broken. Maybe it wasn't apparent right after the school fight, but the cracks were there, clear as day.

And Johnny—God, it was so different with him. He couldn't remember the last time he'd felt this wanted. He thought of Johnny; the quiet power in his body when he practiced karate, slight open flap of his black gi. The crinkle around his eyes when he teased Daniel, the way his voice dropped when he said his name.

Daniel looked at Lucille.

"I can't believe you knew I liked him all along."

"A mother always knows," she said, her lips curling sadly. "If it's any consolation, I could tell that he liked you too."

He wondered once why Johnny seemed so comfortable in their relationship.

This was his answer.



That night, dinner was awkward. Daniel couldn't stop thinking about what Lucille had said. Johnny kept darting looks at him from underneath his lashes, but didn't say anything.

When they were done eating, Johnny did the dishes, while Daniel stepped outside to get some air. The backyard was beautiful at the time of the night. The pond reflecting the light off the moonlight, and a cool breeze that caused goose bumps to rise on his arms.

Daniel walked to a small spot next to the bridge and lay down on the grass, resting his hands on his stomach. The stars were bright at this time, peppering the sky like little pebbles. He didn't know how long he spent staring at the sky, but after a while, he heard the door swing open.

Footsteps drew closer until they slowed down by his side. A moment of hesitation, and then

Johnny was laying down next to him with a sigh. He jostled Daniel's shoulder, as he tried to find a comfortable position.

Once he settled down, he stopped moving, and just watched the sky with him.

"Every summer, my mom would rent a cabin up in Mountain Lakes," Daniel started quietly. "It had a small backyard, and I loved it so much. I used to spend hours every night, just staring at the sky."

"That's nice," Johnny said, and he sounded like he meant it.

"Yeah. Stargazing is like looking at a photograph in space and time. Some stars are gone, other have just been born. I don't know why it always made me feel at peace, to know I could see them all in one place."

There was a small pause, and then Johnny spoke quietly.

"The past, present and future."

Daniel nodded slowly. "Do you know how we got here?"

"What do you mean?"

"If you could pick one event that brought us where we are today, which one would it be?"

Johnny stayed silent, as he mulled it over. There was the gentle sound of water tumbling over rocks in the distance.

"The elevator."

Daniel frowned, and turned his head. "What?"

"At the hospital. If you hadn't talked to me after..." Johnny trailed off, before swallowing. "If you hadn't confronted me in the elevator, I wouldn't have lashed out, and we wouldn't have made that promise to each other."

Daniel blinked fast, as he thought about that night. It was after the school fight. The tension in Samantha's room had been suffocating, so he'd gone out to get some air. He'd run into Johnny just as he'd entered the elevator.

Johnny's face had been pale, withdrawn; and as the door had closed, an ocean of silence had settled between them. Daniel had wanted so much to say something in that moment. He'd wanted them to agree to put their past behind them. The words had been there, lodged his throat, desperate to come out.

His silence had always been one of his biggest regrets. Seeing the pain in Johnny's face, not doing anything about it.

He'd actually *said* something in this world?

Now, Johnny leaned over and kissed Daniel on the jaw. "Sorry I punched you in the face."

Before he could move back, Daniel grabbed him by the shoulder. Up close, Johnny's eyes were a startling blue even in the darkness. Daniel swallowed.

He never kissed Johnny first—maybe it was a hang-up from his previous life, left-over shame he

couldn't get rid of—now Daniel surged forward, sealing their lips together. Johnny's mouth parted in surprise, but he wrapped an arm around Daniel's waist, bringing him closer.

Their tongues swirled around one another, and then Johnny was rolling on top of him. He was hard against Daniel, grinding his hips in slow circles like he couldn't help himself. The kiss was thorough and deep, as they explored each other's mouths.

Daniel released his lips, and pressed their foreheads together.

“Wanna take it inside?” Daniel rasped.

Johnny's gaze heated, and he nodded. He got up and wiped the back of his jeans, before extending his arm. Daniel pulled himself to his feet, and then Johnny was leading him into the house.

He was so nervous, his stomach twisting and tying itself into knots. It felt different this time, and they both knew it.

Johnny cupped his cheek immediately upon entering the room, and kissed him again. A hand pushed up his shirt, and then they were undressing each other, slowly. Once they were naked, Johnny pushed him down on the bed, only disconnecting their lips for a second, before crawling on top of him.

They kissed for a few more minutes. Daniel could tell it was more to calm his nerves than anything. Johnny's hand trailed down his chest, dipped beneath his waist and closed around him. Daniel threw his head back with a moan.

Johnny spent a crazy amount of time just jerking him off. He kissed and nibbled his way down Daniel's throat, sucking the skin in-between his teeth. Daniel was so turned on, he thought he was going to explode, his hips rocking with every jerk of Johnny's hand.

Instead of finishing him off as he usually did, Johnny released him and leaned forward, opening his drawer.

Daniel breathed, as Johnny uncapped the bottle and spread lube on his fingers. It was nerve-racking. He pulled Johnny down for a kiss just as he entered the first finger. He'd tried it before, but it was so *different* at the hands of somebody else. Johnny was careful, thrusting gently inside of him. Soon, Daniel felt the pressure of a second finger. He tensed.

Johnny kissed his way down Daniel's chest, licking and biting.

“Shhh, relax,” he said, before wrapping his lips around Daniel's dick and swallowing him down. Daniel moaned, and dug his fingers in Johnny's hair. His mouth was so hot. Johnny continued to stretch him, but Daniel couldn't feel the sting anymore, too busy panting at the ceiling, holding back his moans. He barely felt the third finger.

When Johnny withdrew his fingers, Daniel was shaking with arousal. Johnny placed a pillow under Daniel's hips, and positioned himself at the rim.

“Breathe,” Johnny said, and Daniel didn't realize he was holding his breath. He took a deep breath just as Johnny entered him. Johnny went in slowly, past the first ring of muscle, past the second. Daniel gritted his teeth, until Johnny's pelvis was flush against his ass.

He bent down and peppered kisses on Daniel's face.

“So good, you're so amazing,” Johnny said. He rocked his hips gently at first, for Daniel to get

used to the sensation, then with a bit more strength. There was a burning sensation with every thrust. Daniel was going to say so when Johnny hit something inside of him, ripping a moan out of him.

“There,” Johnny said, panting. He readjusted his position and aimed for that spot, hitting it again. Daniel threw his head back, moaning.

Johnny bent his head and sucked at his throat. He rolled his hips again and again. It was so good. Stars bursting behind his eyelids, and Daniel’s toes curling with every breath.

His dick was a hard line between him, Johnny’s stomach rubbing against it with every roll of his hips. The friction was amazing, and Daniel was so *close*. He tightened his grip on Johnny’s shoulders, groaning.

“Harder,” Daniel said, and Johnny sank deeper on the next thrust. It was hot, sweat gathering between them, easing the movement of their bodies. Daniel panted as Johnny went faster still, a grunt escaping him with every thrust.

Johnny pressed their foreheads. “Yeah, come on.” He kissed Daniel on the lips. “Come for me.”

They breathed into each other’s mouths. Daniel could feel the pleasure building inside of him, higher and higher. He couldn’t hold back anymore.

“Johnny, I’m—”

He clenched his jaw, as his stomach went rock hard and the orgasm swept over him.

“Fuck, you’re so tight. Yeah,” Johnny said, burying his face into Daniel’s throat. “So good.”

He continued to snap his hips, two, three times, and then he thrust hard inside of Daniel, his hips stilling. Daniel felt Johnny’s dick pulse inside of him like a heartbeat. Then, Johnny collapsed on top of him.

Daniel’s legs dropped on the sides like jelly. He couldn’t feel his body anymore.

They stayed like for a minute, trying to catch their breaths. After a while, Johnny raised his head, and pressed a hard kiss to Daniel’s lips, before flopping on his back.

Daniel shivered at the cold air, but then arms were manhandling him, pulling him into the curve of Johnny’s body, nestled with his back against Johnny’s chest.

There was an uncomfortable feeling of wetness between his thighs, but he didn’t care. He felt like he was floating, like he’d reached up and touched the stars. It took a while for the buzz to go down, and when it did, one thing became very clear to him.

Daniel never wanted to leave this world. He was *happy* here. He didn’t know if it was fate or a glitch in the universe, but he felt at peace for the first time in a long time.

Johnny’s grip tightened around his waist, and lips descended on the place where his neck met his shoulder. Daniel stretched to give him more access. There was a tickling sensation in his throat, like the words were crawling their way up inside of him. It was like in the elevator—he wanted to say the words. He wanted to say them so bad—

He opened his mouth, breathing.

“Marry me.”

Johnny froze, his breath puffing against the wet spot on Daniel’s shoulder.

“What?”

Daniel turned over on his back, and Johnny leaned back on his elbow. There was a light sheen of sweat on his forehead, and his hair was plastered to his temples.

“Marry me,” Daniel repeated, feeling something lift in his chest.

Johnny’s eyes darted all over Daniel’s face. Then, he placed a hand on his face and flopped down on his back

“Daniel, don’t do this to me,” Johnny said.

“Do what?” Daniel asked.

“We all know it’s the sex talking,” Johnny said, taking off his hand and waving in Daniel’s direction. “I’m so good in the sack that you want my dick forever.”

“Oh my God,” Daniel said. He was mortified but laughing at the same time. “You’re such an ass.”

Johnny ended up chuckling too. It sounded a little quiet, but it helped ease the tension.

Daniel didn’t blame him for his reservations. He hadn’t given Johnny a reason to believe him, but he wanted to fix that. He scooted closer and placed a hand on Johnny’s chest. There was a thundering heartbeat under his palm.

“I know it sounds impulsive,” Daniel said, before looking around him. “But this. For me, this is a second chance at happiness. I didn’t see it before, because I was too hung up on the past, but I do now. I want this for as long as I can have it, and if anything happens to me tomo—” His voice broke off.

He breathed slowly, and then in a steadier voice. “If anything happens, I want to know that at least I took the chance.”

There was a silence, during which they stared at each other. Daniel tried to communicate his sincerity as best as he could with his eyes.

Johnny’s eyes traced over him, soaking up his expression.

“So you really want to do this?” Johnny asked.

Daniel nodded. Johnny bit his lip for a few seconds, like he was considering it. Daniel found himself waiting with bated breath.

Then, Johnny’s lips stretched into a slow smile.

“Okay.”

“Really?” Daniel asked, his heartbeat picking up.

Johnny looked amused now. “Yeah, but under one condition.”

“What?”

Before he could react, Johnny surged forward, kissing Daniel and rolling on top of him. He was heavy, but Daniel didn't care, he was feeling giddy. Johnny leaned back, his blue eyes like two beacons of light in the sky.

"Don't you dare make it a beach wedding."

Daniel smiled, before pulling Johnny down for another kiss.

A beach wedding, it was.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading! I hope you all enjoyed the story. *:•° ✧

I also wrote a fic called *In a Moment Freed* that can be considered a prequel to this story. (It's the elevator scene.)

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!